

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2019

Dr. Steven Dillingham
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Dillingham:

We write today to express our concern with the Census Bureau's process for conducting the decennial census in rural areas. As congressional representatives for the most rural areas of New York State, we would like to bring to your attention the unique difficulties that come with completing an accurate count of every person in our region.

Many areas of our districts are entirely without at-home mail delivery, with local residents relying on a P.O. Box to receive all of their mail. As you are certainly aware, it is the policy of the Census Bureau to only deliver census response forms to at-home mailing addresses and to exclude delivery to P.O. Boxes. This leaves thousands of our constituents at risk of not being counted if the Census Bureau does not devote adequate resources to reach these households.

In 2020, the Census Bureau is expecting the majority of people to answer the census online. The Census Bureau also recommends respondents call a toll-free number to report their household information. These moves jeopardize an accurate count in these same rural areas because there is substantial overlap between areas with no at-home mail delivery and areas lacking adequate broadband internet and cell phone services. A family with no at-home mail delivery, no broadband access, and no cell phone service is in danger of being missed entirely by the census.

The Census Bureau in 2020 will once again be utilizing an "Update/Leave" process for counting persons who do not have at-home mail delivery. The Census Bureau has collected data on which addresses do not have at-home mail delivery and therefore will require visits by door-to-door census takers. Given these policies of the Census Bureau, our rural areas require special attention by census takers to guarantee an accurate count.

We ask that you provide us with answers to the following questions to show that the Census Bureau is taking all necessary steps to ensure an accurate count in our rural areas:

- 1) What preparations is the Census Bureau undertaking to address the expected low response rate in rural areas with no at-home mail delivery?
- 2) What plan is in place to inform residents of rural areas how they can respond to the census, beyond replying to the mailed census form and responding online?
- 3) What additional resources is the Census Bureau devoting to rural areas to ensure an accurate count?

We thank you for your attention on this matter and look forward to a response from you soon.

Sincerely,



Anthony Brindisi

Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik

Member of Congress



Paul Tonko

Member of Congress



Brian Higgins

Member of Congress



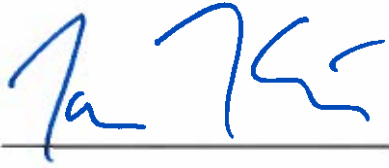
Joseph Morelle

Member of Congress

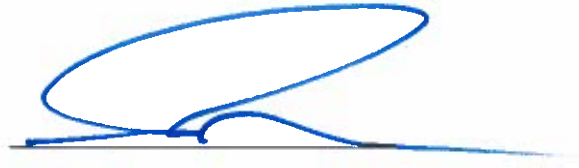


Antonio Delgado

Member of Congress



John Katko
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Tom Reed
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
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